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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

The role of Federal, State, and private agencies in helping migrant children was discussed. Background information given by Norman Thomas and Fay Bennett emphasized survey results. In 1961 there were between 350,000 and 450,000 children of domestic migrant workers in America. In 1959 75,000 of the 500,000 migrant workers in the United States were between 14 and 17 years of age. Of the total number of migrant children, 59 percent were behind in school. Since these children were not residents of the State where their parents worked, they did not have to obey compulsory attendance laws. Their attendance was discouraged by school boards who felt that they lowered school standards. They faced personal obstacles because of their language handicaps and because of their parents' low educational level. Their parents discouraged their school attendance because their earnings were needed at home.

Community and State roles were explained by Afred Potts, 2d, Charles Yersak, Christine Shack, and W.H. Reuf. The educational program for migrant children in New Jersey consisted of elementary education similar to the public school offerings, with material adapted to migrant children's own experience. In New York State, only $33,000 of $40,000 appropriated for migrant education was expended. The Colorado legislature appropriated ten percent more than the Department of Education requested for migrant education.

The Federal government's role was explained by Vera Pratt. The Migrant Education Bill provided a three-point Federal aid to States to provide medical care for migrant families. Another Senate proposal extended the child labor protections to migrant children.

Ways in which private organizations can help were explained by Edith Lowry and Michael Munk. They can arouse public opinion, influence governmental action, implement new legislation, and initiate pilot programs and demonstration projects.

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PLEASANTVILLE, NEW YORK

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ROgers 9-7790

November 9, 1961

Dear Friend,

We are happy to enclose a report on the recent Migrant Children's Fund Conference, held July 29th at Northport, New York. If you attended the conference, you will remember its stimulating atmosphere, and we hope the report captures some of the interest and dedication that you, as a participant, demonstrated.

If you were unable to attend, we offer the report as a summary of the problems faced by America's most neglected children, together with some expert suggestions for overcoming them. In giving the report a wide distribution, the Migrant Children's Fund hopes that its conference will have an influence far beyond its immediate participants. Additional copies are available on request.

You will be hearing from us shortly about other activities of the Migrant Children's Fund. Our conference report, through its variety of speakers from various levels of public and private agencies, shows a growing concern and increased action toward migrant children. But it also describes the scope of the problems before us -- problems the Fund is working hard to alleviate.

We urge you to study the report and to help the Migrant Children's Fund reach more concerned citizens with its message. Public support, effectively organized in the directions suggested by our report, will eventually give migrant children the opportunity to begin life on an equal footing with other children.

Sincerely yours,

Benjamin E. Mays

Benjamin E. Mays
Chairman

480

Migrants - Migrant Children's Fund

ED002637

A 10-year old migrant child, working in a California onion field with the temperature at 107°.
Photo: Courtesy of Ernest Lowe

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Report of the

MIGRANT CHILDREN'S FUND CONFERENCE

"Migrant Children—The Challenge and Our Response"

I. CYRUS GORDON, Conference Chairman

July 29, 1961

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FOREWORD

This report represents a summary of the Migrant Children's Fund Conference on the pressing needs of America's migrant children and what can be done to meet them. We wish it were possible to reproduce all the stimulating ideas offered by the experts from federal, state, and private agencies that participated, and the lively discussions they produced, but we feel that this report does present the problem clearly and accurately, together with suggestions for alleviating it.

The report brings together facts and personal experience with migrant children that are not easily found elsewhere. We urge you to study it carefully, particularly the recommendations made by the speakers. For an awareness of the obstacles that migrant children face in our "affluent society" is not enough: the time has come when we must be prepared to provide these children with opportunities to share the benefits of our society.

The Migrant Children's Fund hopes that its report will contribute to bringing the day when the children of migrant farm workers can start life on an equal footing with other American children.

MIGRANT CHILDREN'S FUND
Pleasantville, New York

17-years old, this migrant worker works full time to help support her family. She traveled 5,000 miles this year, and her bucket of grapes weigh 50 lbs.

Photo: Courtesy of Ernest Lowe

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

I. Cyrus Gordon, Conference Chairman

Secretary-Treasurer, Migrant Children's Fund

I am glad to welcome all of you to this important conference, and I am gratified by your impressive attendance. While it exceeded our expectations and therefore taxes our facilities here, the interest in migrant children it represents will more than make up for some of your rather cramped seating arrangements.

We of the Migrant Children's Fund Board feel a particular warmth for and appreciation to Mrs. Marion Ingersoll whose vision helped to found this organization. In Board meetings of the National Sharecroppers Fund where the Migrant Children's Fund got its start, Mrs. Ingersoll talked about the need for bringing greater educational opportunities to migrant children. "Couldn't we have schools on wheels" she asked, "to follow the children as they move with their parents to harvest crops?" We give particular thanks to Mrs. Ingersoll for inviting this conference to her beautiful home at Duck Island and for providing the buffet luncheon which awaits us, and for all of her generous and helpful support to the Migrant Children's Fund since its formation.

All of you, both individually and as members of the organizations that you represent, are here because of your concern for America's most neglected children, and because you want to do something about it. You are eager to hear from our speakers, some of whom have traveled half-way across the country for this conference. So, without further delay, let us watch the film, "Down the Road," produced by the American Jewish Committee's Institute of Human Relations and co-sponsored by the National Sharecroppers Fund, and then listen to and question our speakers....

THE CHALLENGE

Norman Thomas

Member, Board of Directors, Migrant Children's Fund

It is a sad thing to realize that, at the same time our federal government is hesitating over legislation (1) to improve conditions for its own migrant workers, it extends an agreement with Mexico providing for minimum standards of pay and living conditions for the foreign workers imported under Public Law 78. If only the Congress showed as much concern for a half-million American citizens who harvest our food and follow the crops, and whose miserable pay is lowered still further by this captive work force of "braceros," there would be less need for conferences such as this.

Preliminary information for 1959 indicates that 75,000 of the 500,000 migrant workers in this country are children between 14 and 17 years of age. In addition, between 100,000 and 150,000 children under 14 years old accompany their parents as they follow the crops around the country. An even larger group of children of migrant workers, numbering between 175,000 and 225,000, remain at their home base during the migratory season. Combining the three groups of migrant children, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare estimates that there are between 350,000 and 450,000 children of domestic migrant workers in America. The 1954 estimate was 320,000. (2)

The child labor section of the Fair Labor Standards Act specifically excludes agricultural workers in their most important provisions. The only protection afforded prohibits children under 16 from working during school hours only. With some states and many local school boards declaring "crop vacations" during harvest time, and with the lack of enforcement personnel, it is significant that 4,389 children were found to be illegally employed on farms in 1959, with the great majority often under 14 years of age.

And, unlike many small family farmers, migrant workers are not disappearing as a result of the revolution in American agriculture. Between 1950 and 1959, the number of farms dropped from 5.4 million to less than 3.7 million, while total farm acreage actually increased as farms became larger and more mechanized. In Mississippi, for example, small tenant farmers and sharecroppers decreased from 100,000 to 45,000 between 1954 and 1959, while hired farm workers rose from 18,000 to 31,000. (3) With many former farmers joining the migrant and seasonal farm labor force, and the demand for hired labor increasing on large corporation farms, the number of migrant workers is probably increasing. We cannot, then, stand idly by waiting for the problems of migrants to eliminate themselves.

Migrant life is a vicious circle. Large growers frequently tell us that migrants are lazy, worthless human beings who cannot find other kinds of work and therefore deserve none of the benefits of other American workers. But I submit that such propaganda ignores the fact that any human being, living and working under the conditions that characterize migrant life -- whose life is a desperate struggle merely to stay alive -- may not show the qualities that farm employers consider "decent" and "respectable."

(1) c.f. Vera Pratt p. 7
(2) Statistics from "Children in Migrant Families" Report of HEW, 1960
(3) "Sharecroppers in the 60's" published by the National Sharecroppers Fund, 1961

The old adage "Them as has gets," is borne out in the case of the migrant workers of this nation. The migrants have no economic power because their average pay is barely $900 a year, and they have no political power because they are unorganized and usually cannot vote. In short, they have nothing and cannot get anything on their own. Their employers, on the other hand, are powerful, both economically and politically.

Ultimately, the best hope for the migrants lies, in my opinion, on a union form of organization. When I first became interested in low-income farm families, the Southern Tenants Farmers Union was being organized in the South, and everyone was astonished that I could even ask whether these farm children had gone to school -- "Of course not," was the typical answer, "It's too far to walk without shoes." There has been some progress since those days, but precious little considering the progress other groups of American workers have made. I think that in a relative sense, the position of farm workers has actually deteriorated during the past twenty years. In 1952, their average daily pay was $6.92. By 1959, it had fallen to only $6.00.

I suggest that the federal government shift a little of its concern from its imported Mexican workers to our domestic workers. I suggest that it establish a minimum level of decency for American migrants, specifically including an enforced minimum wage. Private groups have done much, but until the federal government recognizes that migrants are a national responsibility, we shall be dealing with effects, rather than causes. It is up to all of you to make our lawmakers aware of this responsibility, and act on it.

Supper for a migrant child: A melon he has picked—and flies.

Fay Bennett
Executive Director, Migrant Children's Fund

I would like to begin by presenting a few facts on the kind of education migrant children can expect to receive in this country that prides itself on free, public education for everyone.

The Department of Labor found that of the over 4,000 children mentioned by Mr. Thomas to have been found illegally employed in agriculture in 1959, 66 per cent were enrolled in school grades below normal for their age. At age 15 the percentage rose to 87 per cent! A recent nationwide survey by the Wage & Hour Division of the Department of Labor found 59 per cent of all migrant children behind in school. State surveys paint the same terrible picture - Oregon: between 59 and 79 per cent of migrant children behind as much as 6 years for the 17-year olds. Colorado: 67% retarded. Pennsylvania: the great majority retarded from 2 to 5 years. Every study made makes the same point: Since migrant children are not residents of the states to which they travel, compulsory attendance laws do not apply to them. School boards often feel migrant children pull down local standards, and discourage their attendance. Finally, due to the low educational level of their parents and frequent language difficulties, migrant children face great personal obstacles in completing their education. As Edward R. Murrow pointed out in "Harvest of Shame," "The best hope of the migrants lies in the education of migrant children." For in mid-twentieth century America, the number of jobs which can be filled by unskilled workers is constantly decreasing, and an education has become a necessity to migrant children trying to break out of their "vicious circle."

A further obstacle is the low wages paid to the parents of migrant children. Every cent the children earn is a necessity for the family. Consequently, parents often encourage children to stay home from school to work in the fields, and add their pitiful earnings to the family income. Better wages are a prerequisite to the utilization of future educational opportunities for migrant children.

Other children, usually the older girls, must stay at home to care for the youngest while the mother is working in the fields. Until adequate (4) day care centers are established in migrant areas, this will continue to be another pressure keeping migrant children out of school.

I would like to close on a more positive note. The results of one of the most important projects that the Migrant Children's Fund has supported are now available in the book, "Knowing and Teaching the Migrant Child," by Elizabeth Sutton (National Educational Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.). Known as the Florida-Virginia project, it was based on the study of a group of migrant children as they traveled between the two states. In an effort to meet the special educational problems of these children, materials and texts were drawn up based on the experience of the migrants themselves. School boards in both states cooperated on a traveling school record card that would accompany the children as they moved. I urge you all to read this excellent book, by a teacher sympathetic to and experienced in working with migrant children. Its results show what can be done, and are signposts for the future.

WHAT CAN COMMUNITY AND STATE AGENCIES DO FOR THE MIGRANT CHILD?

Dr. Alfred N. Potts, 2d
Project Coordinator, Migrant Education Research Project, Colorado State Department of Education

The Migrant Children's Fund has already contributed effectively by supporting a part of the Colorado program that was designed to find some of the answers and means to one segment of the migrant problem -- the education program. We are extremely grateful for this aid and want you to know that the production of the publication "Learning on the Move" was made possible in large measure through the use of your grant.

Filled fully with matters pertaining to basic life needs, the soul of the migrant worker relates itself to the values of food, shelter, rubber-on-the-tires, money-for-gasoline. He, his wife, and his children have as much potential as we have for observing beauty, drinking it in, applying it against a developed set of aesthetic values. The reason this type of pleasure is denied him is the overwhelmingness of demands that are much closer to physiological life. Thus, his pleasures, in most part, are derived from simpler things. Things that are more easily understandable to him who has been limited to understandings that can be used in the real world of his existence. There has been little time -- and no room at all -- for the development of the higher planes of self-hood.

So, we can compare ourselves with these people. We are much more like them than unlike them. The phenomenon of life has been unfolded only a little way to most of them. To us, achievement of more complete self-hood has allowed us many more returns from the culture, from the values our predecessors have created for our enrichment.

Now, the question is: what can be done by community and state agencies for -- no, not for -- the migrant child; rather, with the migrant child? My belief is that education is a prime necessity for virtually all of these people. Programs that will work with them for self improvement are of greater importance even than more immediate concerns that might improve housing, wages, safety on the road. Without preparation for fuller life, there is no hope of the individual living a better life.

A graduate student on a midwestern university campus, who is Principal of a school of mixed-culture children in Arizona, recently asked the all-important question relating to the education of minority group children. His question: Who shall assume the responsibility for determining the educational fate of these children? Who, indeed? Are the parents prepared for determining their "educational fate"? For, that which they are educated to, will mold their lives. Do we of the majority have the audacity to shape the mold that will affect the pattern of their lives? Do we take on the responsibility with, or without, the consent of the group? How can the parents be involved in decision-making? Do we assume this responsibility, and authority, merely as a protective device for the culture of our next generation? I believe that society must assume this authority, the responsibility, and the burden of support. However, it must be done, in so far as humanly possible, with a concurrent "advice and consent" elicited from the minority groups in our truly democratic sportsmanship manner of broadening the viewpoints of members of the group so that they, too, will see the wisdom and whole-heartedly support the program.

How is the job to be done? Is there ample support for us to say, "Federal Government, you take over this job. These are mostly interstate people. This is your responsibility!" I can concur with this view on a limited principle only. Some monetary support could be, and perhaps, should be, given to the effort by the Federal Government.

(4) The combined capacity of all migrant day care centers is less than 1,000 children.

This is acceptable for two reasons; the central government has a more adequate tax base for providing support and this is a national problem, and, secondly, the central government is in a position to provide effective leadership in presenting the total truths of the matter as it affects the total national society. However, I maintain, and quite vigorously, that our American system works in such a manner that true and lasting strength is built into the structure of a program that affects the people only by the participation of all the people who are affected.

Who are affected by the welfare, by the capability stature of migrants? It is the people of every hamlet, every city, every county, every state of the Union. The task of uplifting fellow citizens then, must be assumed by the people in the localities wherever migrants <u>are</u>.

To stir all peoples in all communities to action requires organized leadership to implement any one particular responsibility. Ultimately the ideal of equal opportunity for all peoples would conceivably be acknowledged by all power groups. Left to a natural course of events this new viewpoint would permeate all groups sometime in the distant future. But, it might be the <u>very</u> distant future. Democracy must learn to organize itself for accomplishment of objective purposes within reasonable time limits. My proposal is that some representative agency, or agencies in cooperative effort, take on the task of "selling" the idea of education for the migrant through the means of a program of education directed toward the controlling power groups. Such a program has been in operation for at least the past decade, but true to the American way, it has been a segmented program. One organization does something this month that sends out a partial, factual account to some segments of our society, two months later a commercial service industry broadcasts a view, a government agency then presents a report or a study -- this study gets to 10,000 desks, is read by 2,500 people, and the news it carries ultimately reaches 50,000. But the views of 50 million need to be adjusted through knowledge of the true facts.

These efforts are highly commendable. We are forced to acknowledge, however, that they are eclectic, piecemeal; they may hit, and secure responses; others, for effort expended, are not paying propositions in terms of information spread abroad.

I am saying that in communities and states where little is being done the reason for the inertia is due to so-called "conservative" forces maintaining a status quo primarily because red blood is not being poured into the potential supporters of the "do-something" viewpoint.

All I am saying is based upon reality. Our experience in Colorado shows what can be done. There, a three-year research program was set up. In three years, we were to know the facts about migrant children and their families. At the beginning of Year Two readable, understandable, reliable, studies of various facets of the migrant problem began to appear. These had the ring of truth, of authenticity. These were not received as propaganda; these gave <u>all</u> the picture, not just one side.

The studies and reports went to all and any who asked, and many to those who did not ask, but were known to possess limited views. Citizens groups expanded state-wide programs around these studies; new purposeful migrant committees and councils were organized, newspapers asked for the studies with the telephone comment "We are building a migrant section in our editorial library." Articles would appear, editorials would follow. Initial contacts to gain support of the news media were made by local people, not representatives of the state.

The factual studies poured out over a period short of two years. These separate studies were intended as bases for chapters in a final report of the three-year project. Nine months before the final report appeared in print, a representative state group, supported by numerous local migrant councils, uniformly by churches, and by civic groups said: "We shall write bills to present to the State's General Assembly this year." The schedule of the project had been to gain support for state action in four to five years.

On the basis of the recommendations that were to appear in the final report, a migrant education bill was written. Four other bills were prepared.

The bills pertaining to housing, transportation, contractors, health and safety did not reach the floor of either House. Committees sent them to the Legislative Council for "a year of further study." The bill establishing a complete year-round program for educating migrant children passed with unanimous votes in both Houses.

The lament of the potential opposition to the education measure floated, quite inaudibly, from the legislative chambers, "With all their facts, they didn't leave us a leg to stand on!"

Charles G. Yersak
Supervisor, New Jersey Bureau of Migrant Labor

In 1945, the New Jersey legislature created the Bureau of Migrant Labor within its Department of Labor, and gave it the power to recommend and enforce legislation relating to migrant workers and their children's education. On its Advisory Board were two farmers, one worker's representative, and two representatives of the Department of Labor.

In 1947, the first special school for migrants, held during the summer when the greatest number of migrant children were in the state, was established. Sixty-eight children attended. This year there were three such schools, with an enrollment of 242 students.

But we in New Jersey are far from satisfied with the present situation. There should be at least 600 migrant children in school who are not, for reasons well-explained by the first two speakers. Each year we must fight for funds with the state legislature, and we encounter many problems in coordinating our Bureau's activities with other concerned state departments, such as Education and Welfare. We must make constant adjustments of our program to meet shifting patterns of migration. With the help of the State Council of Churches and similar groups, we make a great effort to convince the public that more state support is necessary.

Two of our staff members are here with me today, and they shall discuss in more detail the educational program for migrant children in New Jersey. But let me express the hope that those of you from my state will actively support our efforts, for without organized and effective public opinion, the limits of state action are too narrow compared with the scope of the problem.

Christine Shack
Teacher, New Jersey Migrant School Program

In our educational and intelligence testing program among New Jersey's migrant children, we have found a general retardation in educational achievement of between one to two years below the norm, depending directly upon the amount of traveling done by these children. The more they travel and disrupt their schooling, the greater the retardation. On the other hand, and contrary to certain claims, we found no evidence of any inferiority in intelligence. In other words, basic intelligence levels among migrant children are quite normal, and several cases of extremely gifted children are found. If only such children were given the opportunity to reach their full potential, this country would be developing its most valuable natural resource more fully.

We try, in our special schools for migrants, to offer an elementary education similar to regular public schools. We attempt to educate the migrant child to fit into our general social pattern and integrate him into community life.

We operate schools in local school buildings between April and November, the period of greatest migrant worker influx. We offer day care, kindergarden, and primary grades of three levels: 1-2 grade, 3-4 grade, and 5-6 grade. Our curriculum follows the suggestions made in Elizabeth Sutton's book, mentioned by Miss Bennett: our material is adapted to migrant children's own experience.

We divide the curriculum into Reading, Arithmetic, Language Arts, and Social Arts. Our 3 schools and 2 day care centers are filled to capacity.

In some areas students have returned for as many as 4 consecutive years, retaining their enthusiasm and passing it on, in many cases, to their parents. Once a child drops behind in school, it is difficult to develop the motivation necessary to catch up with children of their own age. But we have many examples of this happening, of whole new worlds of experience unfolding for these migrant children. Personally it is extremely gratifying work.

What can be done: School for migrant children in Florida.

W. H. Reuf
Supervisor, Elementary Education, New York Department of Education

Of the $40,000 appropriated for migrant education by the New York State legislature last year, only $33,000 was actually expended. While our special summer schools were in their 7th year of operation and were held in 9 centers with an attendance of 241 students, I think that, frankly, the failure to use even what was appropriated lies in the lack of imagination at the community level. It is there that pressure must be built up, to persuade local school boards to plan special sessions and request money from the state.

Dr. Alfred Potts

This year, Colorado had 800 migrant children in its schools. The legislature has, on the recommendation of the Department of Education, appropriated $99,000 for migrant education. This, I am happy to say, is 10 per cent more than we had asked for. It also passed a Migrant Education Law, which makes it compulsory for migrant children to attend school even if they are not permanent state residents. We feel real progress has been made, and that it stems from the comprehensive study our office made of the problem. We have an annual special teacher training workshop, which has been aided by the Migrant Children's Fund.

WHAT CAN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DO?

Vera Pratt
Staff Member, Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor

I am sorry that Jane Butler, Assistant Chief of the Program Development Branch, Division of Social Services at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, who was scheduled to share this section of the conference with me, was taken ill last night and cannot be with us. I know that the subject of migrant children is a close and continuing interest of hers.

The first federal investigation into the problems of migrant workers was made by Senator Robert LaFollette in 1936, with no resulting legislation. Again in 1940 a labor subcommittee made recommendations but again, with no results.

However, in 1959, the Subcommittee of which I am a staff member was formed under the Chairmanship of Senator Harrison Williams of New Jersey, and a new era for federal action began.

The Williams Subcommittee reported out favorably 5 bills to improve conditions for migrant workers. All of these have passed the Senate but, unfortunately, have been held up in the House Rules Committee, which has never been friendly to the interests of American farm workers. Three of the Senate-approved bills have a special bearing on migrant children, and I recommend that you give them close study. Copies are available from our Subcommittee in Washington.

The Migrant Education Bill (S. 1124) provides a three-point program of federal assistance to local education agencies, which offer opportunities to migrant children. It provides for a sliding scale of payments to school districts giving schooling to migrants, ranging from full costs the first two years to half thereafter. Funds for summer schools and further research on educational problems of migrant children are also included. This program covers a 5-year period.

S. 1130 would give $3 million of federal assistance to states for the purpose of providing medical care for migrant workers and their families. This is vitally needed in view of the extremely high disease and infant mortality rates among migrants, resulting from the lack of medical facilities and unsanitary living conditions.

An extension of the child labor protections to migrant children are contained in S. 1123. This bill provides for
1) a 14 year old minimum for agricultural employment, with the exception that 12-14 year olds may work on farms less than 25 miles from their permanent residence and
2) authorizes the Secretary of Labor to prohibit children under 18 from working in particularly hazardous occupations.

So, after twenty years, a few small steps are being taken. I hope that the support of informed and concerned citizens such as yourselves will bring these legislative proposals into reality, and further, will help us make even greater progress in the future. Without you, there is nothing the federal government can do for migrant children, but with you, it can accept the migrant children as a national responsibility.

WHAT CAN PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS DO?

Edith Lowry
National Director, The Migrant Ministry, Division of Home Missions, National Council of Churches

Most of the speakers today from state and federal government agencies have commented that without an informed and organized public, their contribution to the solution of migrant children's problems is limited. I would certainly agree. Private organizations represent these concerned citizens and their potential influence is very great. In fact, they have already made this influence felt.

One role of private organizations is to arouse public opinion. I cite the greatly increased interest in the problems of migrant workers as the result, largely, of such organizations as the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, which held public hearings in Washington, D.C., in 1959, the National Conference to Stabilize Migrant Life of the Catholic Council on Working Life, and my own Migrant Ministry of the National Council of Churches. After Edward Murrow's CBS television documentary, "Harvest of Shame," it is no longer a problem to get press and radio coverage of the migrant problem. All of these events have combined to form a favorable climate for action by state and federal bodies, and it has been largely, as I said, the result of private groups working to bring the problems of migrants before the public.

Now private groups have the responsibility to influence governmental action, in addition to strengthening public awareness and concern. The bills mentioned by Miss Pratt face a hard fight in Congress, and the influence of private organizations may decide whether these bills pass or fail. I would urge all of you, and your organizations, to write your representatives asking their favorable vote on these Williams-Zelenko bills to improve the lives of America's migrant workers.

Private organizations have a long range responsibility to keep not only the public, but themselves, aware of new facts and changing conditions in the migrant field. They must constantly stand ready to offer testimony in Congressional hearings, to offer sound factual analysis and practical suggestions. Private groups have an advantage that special-interest groups do not: they have no axe to grind and their opinions are respected. We must all use this distinction to full advantage.

Another responsibility of private agencies is the implementation of new legislation. Where states have recently begun summer schools for migrant children, the public must be informed of what they represent, and migrant families must be urged to take advantage of new opportunities. These new programs, whether on the state or federal level, cannot succeed or be expanded without the active support of private organizations.

The relationship of private to public organizations, especially government agencies, is partnership. Neither can do the job for migrant children that needs to be done without the other. For example, when certain migrant workers came under the provisions of social security, the Social Security Administration was at a loss to know how to operate. It asked private groups for advice, since they were the only source of experience in working with migrants. Private groups distributed information and films on the social security program to migrants, to acquaint them with their new rights and obligations. With cooperation between the two agencies, excellent results were achieved.

Another example is the U. S. Public Health Service which lent a nurse to a private organization to survey what health services were now available to migrants, in preparation for the possible passage of the migrant health bill mentioned by Miss Pratt.

Private groups must be prepared to act in direct ways as well. With the migrants, the local, individual contact is what ultimately counts. There is a need for private groups to initiate pilot programs and demonstration projects in the field of migrant children's education, so that state and federal agencies can have the benefit of experience before committing themselves to specific programs of education. Such private projects should be seen as catalysts for expanded and continuing responsibility by public bodies.

For example, the Migrant Ministry established the first day care center for migrants in New York State in 1931. During the second World War, public funds were granted for its continued operation and, finally, after the war, the state assumed full responsibility.

I would like to close with the thought that, despite the seeming futility of migrant life, migrant workers have not lost the ability to think and work for a better life for themselves. I am reminded, when I think of the enormous job that must be done before migrant children can take an equal place in our society, of the migrant worker who wanted to build a house for his family. So he went to the dump and brought back a door frame. Then, each week, he would count his earnings and buy a cinder block until finally he was able to complete his home...

Michael Munk
Program Director, The Migrant Children's Fund

Edith Lowry has left me with little to say about the role of private organizations in working on behalf of migrant children. We agree with all of her suggestions.

I will just add a few words about the Migrant Children's Fund. Originally formed by the Board of Directors of the National Sharecroppers Fund in 1954, it has, in its short history, made several accomplishments in cooperation with other groups working in the field of migrant education. During the past year, for example, the Fund has given financial support to the summer schools for migrant children in Pennsylvania, and the school staff reported excellent results in the education and stimulation of some 105 children. Next year, we are gratified that the state legislature has appropriated $15,000 to put this program on a permanent basis. The MCF has also provided scholarships for teachers to attend the Colorado workshop on migrant education. Many teachers were able to gain practical experience in teaching migrant children, and learn special techniques for non-English speaking children. This year also saw the publication of the study aided by the MCF in Florida and Virginia. Miss Sutton's book has already been mentioned by Fay Bennett.

The MCF publishes annually a report on new developments in the field of migrant children's education. Over 6,000 have been distributed this year and copies are available for anyone who requests them.

Looking toward the future, the Migrant Children's Fund hopes to continue its support of such studies and pilot projects that can especially contribute to opportunities for migrant children. It hopes to concentrate its activities on creating an awareness at the local level of the availability of some public money for migrant children. All these are functions that Edith Lowry enumerated.

We must not lose sight of the goal of our private organizations. It is first and foremost to assure that the problems and needs of migrant children become accepted as a national public responsibility. We are all in debt to those who harvest our food, to those without whom we would starve. Migrants perform a most vital national service, and their remuneration is quite in contrast to their contribution. With the partnership of all concerned agencies, we can work toward our ultimate goal: the abolishment of the social and economic discrimination against migrants; their integration into our society as full citizens.

No electricity, no books, no school for this migrant child. The Migrant Children's Fund is working for his future.
Photo: Harvey Richards

CLOSING REMARKS

I. Cyrus Gordon, Conference Chairman

After looking over our conference schedule, I feel the question, "What Can the Federal, State, and Private Agencies Do for the Migrant Child?" has been well answered. We have seen the challenge and made our response. But I shall still ask the remaining question in my own mind, in the hopes it may reflect your concern as well: "What can we as individuals do?" And I will presume to answer it.

Go back to your homes, communities, and organizations; tell others what you have heard here today. It is only in this way that we can judge the success of our day's work. If we can succeed in making ourselves heard throughout this land, then all of us who acted as participants will be gratified, and all of you who came as listeners and questioners will feel your time well spent. Public support for migrant children depends on people like you who came here today, and its extent is measured by how many others you inform and arouse.

In driving home, you will pass through a region where many migrant workers live and work. Let the scenes you will see take full effect and relate them to what you have heard today. The combination is the source of our dedication.

THE MIGRANT CHILDREN'S FUND

cooperates with various agencies to increase public awareness for the conditions under which migrant children must live. The Fund helps to direct this growing interest toward the goal of equal opportunities for all American children to make full use of their abilities in useful, rewarding lives.

MIGRANT CHILDREN'S FUND, Inc., Pleasantville, New York

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